



SPRING WEATHER SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS

TOOLBOX TALK SERIES – WEATHER

March 2026

Video Introduction

Today's safety topic begins with a short training video from **Ally Safety**:

Title: *"Here are the bet Lightning Safety Tips"*

Watch here: <https://youtu.be/DVZJynfH5RY?si=5DlyR9XHUPPROjyv>

This video highlights the dangers of lighting and thunderstorms.

PURPOSE

Spring weather in our region often brings rapidly developing storms, high winds, heavy rain, lightning, and occasional late-season snow. These events increase the demand on Public Works and Parks personnel for debris removal, drainage management, traffic control, and facility response.

Storm response work is inherently hazardous. Downed trees, unstable limbs, flooded roadways, energized utility lines, and reduced visibility create dynamic and unpredictable conditions. The purpose of today's discussion is to reinforce safe work practices during storm and high-wind response operations to ensure that all personnel return home safely.

UNDERSTANDING THE HAZARDS

High winds can cause structural damage, falling limbs, flying debris, and utility line failures. Even after the storm passes, hazards remain. Trees under tension may shift without warning. Saturated ground can cause equipment instability. Standing water can conceal roadway damage or electrical hazards.

It is important to remember that storm response is not routine work. Conditions are unstable and may change rapidly. Fatigue, urgency, and public pressure to restore normal conditions can increase risk if not managed properly.



PRE-DEPLOYMENT SAFETY CHECK

Before responding to storm-related calls, crews should confirm that equipment is fully operational. This includes checking lighting, warning systems, chainsaw condition, fuel levels, hydraulic systems, and communication devices. Personal protective equipment must be worn appropriately, including high-visibility apparel, gloves, eye protection, and hearing protection where required.

Supervisors should provide clear assignments and confirm that all personnel understand their roles. Communication protocols must be reviewed before crews separate into different response areas.

TRAFFIC CONTROL DURING STORM RESPONSE

Storm cleanup frequently occurs on roadways with limited visibility and distracted drivers. Rain, fog, and debris reduce stopping distances and reaction time. Proper traffic control is essential.

Advance warning signs and cones must be deployed even during urgent response. Vehicles should be positioned to protect the work area whenever possible. Emergency lighting should be activated, but lighting alone does not replace proper work zone setup.

Crews must maintain situational awareness of traffic at all times. If visibility becomes severely compromised due to weather conditions, work may need to pause until conditions improve.

DOWNED TREES AND LIMB REMOVAL

Trees damaged by high winds present unique hazards. Limbs may be suspended overhead under tension. Cutting without assessing compression and tension forces can result in sudden movement and serious injury.

Before cutting, crews should evaluate the tree's stability, identify escape paths, and communicate clearly. No one should stand directly downhill from a log or in the expected path of movement. Chainsaw operators must ensure proper footing and maintain awareness of kickback zones.

If a tree is entangled with utility lines, crews must not attempt removal until the utility company confirms that lines are de-energized and safe to approach.



DOWNED POWER LINES

All downed wires must be treated as energized unless confirmed otherwise by the utility provider. Electricity can travel through water, wet ground, and even equipment. Maintain a safe distance and prevent public access to the area.

If a line is across a roadway, secure the scene with traffic control and notify the appropriate utility company immediately. Do not approach or attempt to move wires.

LIGHTNING SAFETY

If lightning is present during storm response, outdoor operations should be suspended when possible. Lightning can strike miles away from visible storm clouds. Personnel should seek shelter inside a building or enclosed vehicle. Avoid standing under trees, near metal equipment, or in open areas.

Work may resume only when lightning activity has clearly moved out of the area.

FLOODING AND WATER HAZARDS

Flooded roadways may conceal washed-out pavement, sinkholes, or debris. Vehicles should not be driven through standing water unless depth and road condition are known. Moving water can undermine pavement and cause sudden collapse.

Personnel clearing storm drains should be cautious of swift-moving water and unstable footing. Gloves must be worn when handling debris due to contamination risk.

FATIGUE AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

Storm response often involves extended hours and high-pressure conditions. Fatigue impairs judgment, slows reaction time, and increases injury risk. Supervisors should monitor crews for signs of exhaustion.

Hydration remains important even in cool or rainy weather. Crews should take short breaks when feasible to maintain focus and reduce strain.

No task is so urgent that it justifies unsafe action.



COMMUNICATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

During storm operations, communication is critical. Crews should report their location regularly and notify supervisors when conditions change. If working in isolated areas, maintain radio contact at all times.

Near misses, equipment malfunctions, or unsafe conditions must be reported immediately. Early communication prevents escalation.

PUBLIC INTERACTION

Residents may approach crews with concerns, requests, or complaints during storm cleanup. Maintain professionalism and clear communication. If a request exceeds immediate capacity or priority, direct residents to appropriate Town channels.

Avoid allowing public presence inside active work zones.

POST-STORM INSPECTION

After the immediate response phase, facilities and parks should be inspected for secondary hazards. This includes loose roofing materials, damaged playground equipment, leaning trees, washed-out trails, and blocked drainage structures.

Identifying and addressing lingering hazards reduces the risk of injury after the storm has passed.

CONCLUSION

Storm response and high-wind operations present unpredictable and serious hazards. By maintaining proper traffic control, treating downed wires as energized, assessing tree tension before cutting, monitoring weather conditions, and managing fatigue, we significantly reduce risk.

Safety must remain the priority even when operational demands are high. Careful, coordinated, and deliberate action ensures that our crews can restore services safely and effectively for the Town of Perinton community.



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